

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 011012Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9565
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3492

DEPT PASS CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, BG
SUBJ: VIEWS OF DG, NSI ON ELECTION

1. POLCOUNSELOR CALLED ON S.A. HAKIM, DIRECTOR GENERAL,
NATIONAL SECURITY INTELLIGENCE, JUNE 1, TO HEAR HAKIM'S
PRE-ELECTION VIEWS ON THE POLLING SCHEDULE FOR JUNE 3.

2. HAKIM SAID THAT HE AND HIS STAFF FELT THAT PRESIDENT
ZIA HAD MOVED WELL AHEAD OF HIS PRINCIPAL OPPONENT, GENERAL
OSMANI. NSI PREDICTIONS NOW WERE THAT ZIA WOULD TAKE 70
TO 80 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, BUT HE PLACED SOME CAVEATS ON
THIS. IT WAS NOTED THAT THE HISTORY OF ELECTIONS IN EASTERN
BENGAL/EAST PAKISTAN/BANGLADESH HAS BEEN ONE OF LANDSLIDE
VICTORIES SINCE THE 1937 ELECTIONS AND HAKIM THOUGHT THERE
WAS NO REASON TO SUSPECT THAT IT WOULD NOT BE EQUALLY SO
THIS TIME. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT OSMANI'S CAMPAIGN
HAD GAINED MORE MOMENTUM IN THE PAST FEW DAYS AND SAID
HE WAS SURPRISED AT THE TURNOUT AT OSMANI'S PALTAN MAIDAN
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(DACCA) RALLY ON JUNE 2. HIS STAFF ESTIMATED OSMANI'S
CROWD AT 100,000 COMPARED WITH ZIA'S 200,000 THE PREVIOUS
DAY (HE DISCOUNTED PRESS REPORTS OF 300,000 FOR ZIA). HE
WAS ALSO WONDERING ABOUT THE EXTENT OF COMPLACENCY AMONG
ZIA'S SUPPORTERS AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE TURNOUT MIGHT
BE LOWERED BY THIS OR BY THE HEAVY RAINS WHICH HAVE
AFFECTED MUCH OF THE COUNTRY. EITHER WOULD BE A GAIN FOR

OSMANI. NONETHELESS, HE STAYED WITH HIS 70-80 PERCENT ESTIMATE FOR ZIA.

3. HE SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS "MATURED" MUCH DURING THE CAMPAIGN. ZIA HAS APPEARED MORE CONFIDENT, IN HAKIM'S OPION, AND HAS DEVELOPED INTO A MUCH MORE FORCEFUL SPEAKER THAN HE HAD BEEN BEFORE. ZIA HAS WARMED TO THE CROWDS IN A FASHION NOT PRESENT DURING EITHER THE REFERENDUM OF LAST YEAR OR DURING HIS MORE CLEARLY "PRESIDENTIAL TOURS" SINCE THEN.

4. HAKIM SAID THAT OF THE THREE LEGS ON WHICH ZIA HAD TRIED TO BUILD HIS ELECTORAL EDIFICE, THE ONE ZIA HAD COUNTED ON LEAST, THE PEOPLE AT LARGE, HAS BECOME TO THE PRINCIPAL SUPPORT. NEITHER THE ZIA FRONT NOR THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION, THE OTHER TWO LEGS, HAS BEEN AS EFFECTIVE AS THE APPEAL DIRECTLY TO THE PEOPLE, ALTHOUGH BOTH ARE ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUPPORTING ZIA.

5. ON THE OSMANI SIDE, HAKIM SEES, AS DO WE, A TENSION BETWEEN THE CANDIDATE AND HIS THREE PARTY GROUP OF SUPPORTERS (AWAMI LEAGUE, NAP/M AND CPB) AS THE AWAMI LEAGUE TRIES TO PROJECT ITS LEADERSHIP AT THE EXPENSE OF OSMANI. OSMANI (AS WE HAVE REPORTED ELSEWHERE) IS UNHAPPY ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF TIME HE IS ALLOTTED DURING PUBLIC MEETINGS AND IS ANNOYED THAT THE AWAMI LEAGUERS

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HAVE DRAWN TOPICS INTO THE MEETINGS WHICH GOBEYOND THE SIMPLE PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY VS. PRESIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT PLATFORM WHICH OSMANI ESPOUSED IN HIS INITIAL DRIVE. OSMANI HAS THREATENED SEVERAL TIMES TO QUIT THE RACE BUT HAS BEEN PERSUADED NOT TO DO SO (TO THE RELIEF OF THE ZIA TEAM WHICH WOULD BE EMBARRASSED BY THE ABSENCE OF ANY CREDIBLE OPPOSITION.)

6. HAKIM WAS ASKED ABOUT THREE SUBJECTS WHICH WILL BE OF INTEREST TO WESTERN GOVERNMENTS AND PRESS:

A. EFFECT OF POLITICAL FIGURES IN JAIL: HAKIM SAID, AT FIRST, THAT ONLY ONE MATTERED, KHONDAKAR MUSHTAQUE AHMAD, AND ADDED THAT HE WAS ACTUALLY A CONVICTED PRISONER AND NOT A POLITICAL DETAINEE. HAKIM ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS HAS SAID THAT THE ARREST AND PROSECUTION OF MUSHTAQUE WAS THE MAJOR POLITICAL BLUNDER OF ZIA'S REGIME. HAKIM EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT HAD MUSHTAQUE BEEN FREE HE PERHAPS WOULD HAVE WORKED FOR ZIA AND WOULD ALSO BE CAPABLE OF BEING PROJECTED AS A POSSIBLE PRIME MINISTER AFTER THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER. MUSHTAQUE IS AN EXPERIENCED POLITICIAN WITH A CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL FOLLOWING

AND IS THE SENIOR SURVIVING MEMBER OF THE POLITICAL GROUP WHICH WORKED FOR AUTONOMY AND LATER INDEPENDENCE FOR EAST PAKISTAN. HAKIM SEES NO PROSPECT FOR A PARDON FOR MUSHTAQUE OR FOR HIS RECONCILIATION WITH ZIA (SEE 6B FOR COMMENT ON SOME OF MUSHTAQUE'S ASSOCIATES). ON FURTHER DISCUSSION, HAKIM ADDED JSD LEADER ABDUR RAB AS ANOTHER WHO MIGHT HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE ELECTION WERE HE NOT IN JAIL. WITH A PARTIAL ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN ZIA AND THE JSD, RAB MIGHT HAVE ADDED SOME STRENGTH TO THE ZIA FRONT. HE DISCOUNTED THE OTHER TWO PRINCIPAL JSD LEADERS IN JAIL (ALL THREE HAVE BEEN CONVICTED, ALTHOUGH BY MILITARY COURTS), SERAJUL ALAM KHAN AND XIJOR JALIL AS, HE SAID, THEY ARE NOT "PUBLIC PLATFORM POLITICIANS." B. BANNED PARTIES: HAKIM CORRECTLY POINTED OUT THAT KEY

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MEMBERS OF THE TWO PARTIES STILL BANNED, THE DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE OF MUSHTAQUE AND THE CPB, ARE ACTIVE IN THE CAMPAIGN. SEVERAL OF THE IMMEDIATE LIEUTENANTS OF MUSHTAQUE ARE ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING FOR ZIA; THE LEADER OF THE CPB, MONI SINGH, IS ON THE OSMANI TEAM. THE JSD HAS BEEN RESTORED TO THE ACCEPTABLE LIST BUT IT IS NOT PRECISELY THE SAME GROUP AS THAT WHICH WAS BANNED AS THE "OVERGROUND" GROUP LED BY M.A. AWWAL IS STILL NOT ACTIVE IN THE CAMPAIGN, ALTHOUGH AWWAL IS NOT IN JAIL. C. "FREE" ELECTIONS: HAKIM REITERATED THAT EVERY MEANS POSSIBLE IS BEING TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT THE ELECTIONS ARE FREE TO THE EXTENT THAT OFFICIALS CAN CONTROL THEM. HE ADDED THAT HE KNEW AND ZIA KNEW THAT THE REFERENDUM RESULT WAS INFLATED AT LEAST AS THE EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION. HE COMMENDED QAZI JALALUDDIN AHMAD AND HIS APPOINTMENT AS ELECTION SECRETARY STAFFPG THAT JALAL IS THE MOST TRUSTWORTHY CIVIL SERVANT IN BANGLADESH. HE SAID ZIA RECOGNIZED FULLY THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ELECTIONS BOTH BEING FAIR AND BEING SEEN TO BE FAIR.

7. HAKIM AGAIN EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT A POSSIBLE COUP BEFORE THE ELECTION IS HELD OR, POSSIBLY, AFTER, BUT SAID THAT HIS SOURCES WERE MUCH LESS ACTIVE ON THIS SUBJECT THAN THEY HAD BEEN EARLIER IN THE CAMPAIGN. HE SAID ALSO THAT THIS WAS THE CASE WITH THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE WITH WHOM HE HAS COMPARED NOTES.

8. IN SUM, HAKIM WAS SANGUINE ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS, SOMEWHAT CONCERNED ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL REACTION AND MILDLY UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHAT WOULD FOLLOW.

SCHNEIDER

NOTE BY OC/T: PASSED TO CINCPAC.

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